



**THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY**  
WASHINGTON DC 20350-1000

JUN 10 2022

From: Secretary of the Navy  
To: Lieutenant General Joseph L. Osterman, USMC (Ret)

Subj: LETTER OF CENSURE

Ref: (a) (b) (6) ltr 5830 of 8 Jan 2021  
(b) COMMARCENT ltr 5800 CDR of 19 May 21  
(c) JAGINST 5800.7G (JAGMAN) 0114a

1. On 30 July 2020, an assault amphibious vehicle (AAV) assigned to the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) sank in the Pacific Ocean while conducting shore-to-ship movement, resulting in the death of eight Marines and one Sailor. Reference (a) examined the events leading to this tragic incident at the tactical level, while reference (b) focused on the forming and compositing of the 15th MEU, its training and material readiness, I Marine Expeditionary Force oversight, and COVID-19 pandemic impacts.
2. As the Commanding General, I Marine Expeditionary Force (CG, I MEF), you were responsible for mitigating the inherent risks in operations and training, and had the authority to do so. The investigations revealed critical safety measures were not implemented during the mishap, required training was not completed, and the AAVs assigned to the 15th MEU were in a degraded state of readiness. Additionally, the 15th MEU composition occurred under compressed timelines due to COVID-19 challenges. As the CG, I MEF, you failed to recognize and alleviate risks associated with conducting waterborne operations and to ensure material readiness of the AAVs assigned to the 15th MEU. You also did not fully appreciate the potential negative impact of COVID-related challenges on the 15th MEU as your subordinate commanders adjusted training and modified schedules in their attempt to meet mission requirements. While no single act or decision led to this tragedy, ultimate accountability rests with you.
3. The Marine Corps requires its leaders to accomplish the mission, even in seemingly insurmountable situations. You failed to identify and mitigate the human, material, and training failures that resulted in this mishap. Accordingly, you are censured for failing to effectively ensure appropriate levels of training and material readiness in units under your command.
4. A copy of this letter will be placed in your official service record per reference (c). You may forward within 15 days of receipt of this letter a rebuttal consistent with reference (c), for inclusion in your official record, if you so desire.

Carlos Del Toro